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William Short to Thomas Jefferson, September 11, 1808, from Thomas Jefferson and William Short Correspondence, Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W. Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

William Short to Thomas Jefferson

Sunday evening Sep. 11.-08

Dear Sir

Your favor of the 6th was received yesterday. Without advancing so far as to leave the least room of suspicion of my object I find that Mr. Biddle's plan is to pursue the commencement he has made in the practice of the law & would not quit it. Of the other two one has an office under the State that he apprehended he should lose, but now having lost that apprehension in a great measure, it is probable he would not quit it. The third from the little I have now seen of him, & I sought them both with a view of forming a judgment, is too young & raw I fear to be as useful as could be wished. The present appearance is therefore that I must postpone making a choice until I arrive in France, where it is said there are several young men on their travels. In this case I will take charge of your despatches for that country, if you judge proper. I shall say that as I am going there they are intrusted to me, merely as a safe hand. This may give me a facility in proceeding from the port to Paris if there should be any obstacle there as to strangers in general. I have omitted always to mention my passport. I suppose Mr. Madison however will send me one which may enable me to proceed to Paris. I mention it now for greater caution, as I shall appear on arriving, a private character known to the Government of France I shall follow your instructions.

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The Collector recieved Mr. Gallatins directions & advertized for proposals to be received to the 10th. So many offered (I think 25) that it took him the whole of yesterday to examine them, & he could not complete the business so as to decide. He will do this to-morrow. The vessel it is said cannot be ready in less than a week from the day of the contract. They are most of them good vessels I believe, but there are many small ones, & I now apprehend

as the only danger that he may take a small one, as they will of course be the cheapest. I have done all that I thought I could take on me with propriety without going too far to prevent this. He seems a prudent & cautious man, & will do I am persuaded what he thinks right. I am not without anxiety on the subject.

I wrote to you on the 4th. If I should find a young man that should appear acceptable, I shall take him immediately & if the youngest brother mentioned in mine of the 4. should on further observation remove my doubt I should propose it to him. In the mean time if you shall have sent the despatches to my charge, I shall be careful of them, & they may have the advantage of securing my passing on to Paris without difficulty.

I say no more at present than to reciprocate your kind wishes & to assure you dear sir of the invariable sentiments of your friend & servantWShort

RC (Jefferson Papers, DLC)